

## Press Statement

7 December 2021

### **Publication of information by local clerics that contradict the amendments to the Sexual Offences Act**

We welcome the ratification (6.12.2021) of the amendments to the Law Number 17/2014 (Sexual Offences Act) that re-defines marital rape as opposed to the limited provisions enforced previously.

We also note that these changes have been met with resistance in the name of religion.

We condemn the incitement of violence against women and the abuse of Islam by some of the Maldivian clerics to defy the amendments on marital rape in the law. The accuracy and validity of information spread, especially via the publication of a blog post<sup>1</sup> on 6 December 2021, by cleric Mohamed Iyaz must be investigated by the religious authorities of the State. Contradictory to the law passed by the People's Majlis of the Maldives, Iyaz flouts the concept of marital rape and encourages violence and divorce where a married woman declines intimate relations with her husband. We remind authorities that the same cleric has continued to publicly advocate for forms of Female Genital Mutilation for several years. The spread of misinformation, particularly those that use religion to encourage criminal behaviour, should be stopped without further delay.

We call on the government to revoke the preaching licenses of those clerics who spread misinformation in the name of Islam. It not only creates religious discord within society, but it also causes violence from within the smallest unit of a society that is the family, to the broader public communities.

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ENDS.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://haftha.mv/117736/>